/524 conr./

165 Factors influencing the demographic characteristics of the Boni. Life expectancy at birth for the Boni is not only 12 years higher than that of the Indians, but is also considerably higher than that of the African peoples from which they came.

This fact can be attributed to two causes:

164 1. The Boni live in a more salubrious environment than
182 the African forest and have better living conditions. It seems likely that the Guianese forest, apart from malaria, presents few causes of bad health and is relatively favorable to man; the absence of trypanosomiasis permits men /525/ to gather on the banks of the large rivers, generously exposed to the air and to the light. The small number of the Boni and their dispersion over a vast territory stands in the way of the transmission of diseases by drinking water. In fact the water is generally healthy. Dysentery and parasitosis are considerably rarer and less serious than in Africa;

14 2. The Boni are a selected population. This is a very im-
162 portant aspect of their demography.

The slaves were the object of a systematic selection; the purchasing commissions of the rich colony of Surinam allowed only individuals of good health and constitution to pass. A second selection took place at the time of the formation of the tribes of Refugee Blacks. More than from a massive rebellion the rebel groups increased in size by the addition of those who, from year to year, escaped at the peril of their lives. Without any doubt those who preferred combat to servitude were the most vigorous and bravest. Voluntary migrations have always been a factor of selection: one may suppose that a migration which took place in such circumstances was accompanied by a particularly rigorous selection which, in spite of the time which has passed (eight generations), continues to influence the physiological
● [734] characteristics of the Refugee Blacks. Notably it can explain
[157] the vigorous constitution of the Boni (there are only two congenital invalids out of 810 persons) and their exceptional qualities of physical courage and initiative.